

The Leading Edge Partnership Programme National Collaborative

Update on progress

January 2005

Contents

Background to the Leading Edge National Collaborative	3
Using Data and Developing a Model for Collaboration	4
Planning & Implementing Tailored Interventions	5
Assessing the Impact on Pupils: What the Data Shows	6
Assessing the Impact on Pupils: Three Schools	7/8
Emerging Learning: A Model for Building Collaborative Practice	9
Next Steps	10

Background to the Leading Edge National Collaborative

Leading Edge Partnerships work collectively to solve learning challenges faced by underperforming schools and/or particular groups of poorly performing pupils. The programme was launched in July 2003 with a first cohort of 103 partnerships involving over 700 secondary schools in England. It has grown with the addition of Cohort 2 in September 2004, a further 102 partnerships.

The first **Leading Edge National Collaborative** was formed in early 2004 of 21 Leading Edge lead partner schools. The aim was to develop and apply a range of classroom based interventions using the methodology of rapid cycle improvement. Participants agreed to tackle a clearly defined learning challenge, namely the underachievement of pupils from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

The following goals were agreed at the outset:

- To raise the attainment of the lowest 20% of performers in KS3 and so reduce the variation of attainment within and between schools
- Through targeted strategies to close the gap in performance that results from socio-economic differences

- To capture and document processes and outcomes in such a way as to enable them to be nationally replicable
- To improve pupil outcomes by identifying effective practice and developing innovative ways of engaging pupils in learning
- To test out a model of rapid cycle improvement through sharing experiences and knowledge.

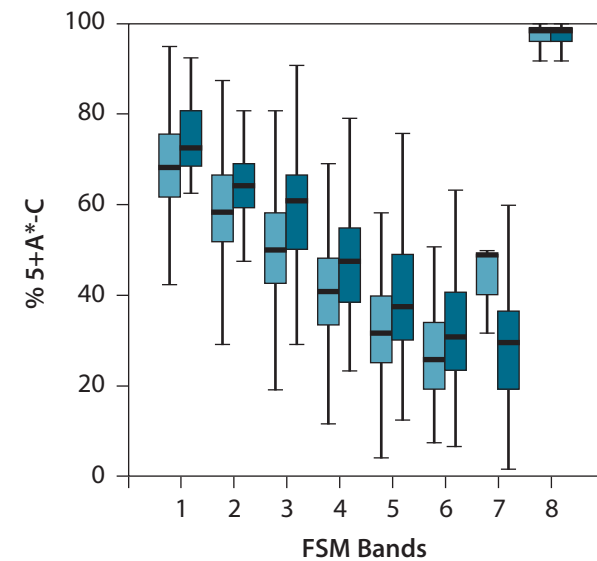
The National Collaborative is a forum for classroom based action research that is underpinned by the commitments made by its member schools, in particular to

- identify relevant and clearly defined pupil target groups
- implement the planned interventions within the agreed cycles
- monitor and evaluate within agreed timescales
- provide regular updates on progress and outcomes
- send representatives to development days and learning workshops
- be generous and honest in sharing successes and failures with fellow practitioners.

Using data and developing a model for collaboration

The socio-economic attainment gap in the UK is known to be exceptionally wide. Some schools, however, have proved themselves capable of breaking the mould. The following graph demonstrates the clear link between attainment and socio-economic status, but it also shows that a few very successful schools with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils outperform many of those in more highly favoured locations.

2003 GCSE: % gaining 5 + A*-C by FSM Band and EIC areas Provisional data



Key to FSM bands

Band	FSM range
1	5% or less FSM
2	5+ to 9%
3	9+ to 13%
4	13+ to 21%
5	21+ to 35%
6	35+ to 50%
7	Above 50%
8	Grammar Schools

Key

■	Non EIC
■	EIC Phases 1, 2 & 3

Such schools already have well developed strategies and interventions that impact upon raising attainment and closing the socio-economic gap. Their success has provided a mainspring for the work of the collaborative.

The key features of the National Collaborative model are

- co-construction of the framework
- co-authorship of the handbook
- a solid research and evidence base
- teacher-led governance
- joint delivery of interventions by teachers
- network support
- dissemination.

The model is based on the assumption that considerable expertise lies within schools, and particularly with classroom teachers.

The vision is of practitioners working together and sharing good practice within an ethos of open communication and willingness to take risks.

The rationale is that rapid gains in pupil attainment can be achieved through carefully tailored interventions, and that systematic monitoring and evaluation over short time scales will reveal levels of impact and clear outcomes.

Planning & implementing tailored interventions

Effective schools are those that have worked out how to raise attainment by a careful analysis of their pupils' learning needs. They have followed this up with the design and implementation of tailored interventions that can be shown through systematic data analysis to have a measurable impact.

At the **First National Collaborative Development Day** in February 2004 teachers were asked to consider four key questions:

- What strategies do you use to identify those children performing below expectations?
- What are the characteristics shared by these pupils?
- What strategies have you tried that have had a positive impact on those pupils' attainment?
- How have you monitored or measured that impact?

Participating schools were free to focus on target groups of their own choice and to trial interventions relevant to their own school's context, but all were committed to close monitoring, evaluation and reporting back within the agreed cycles, typically lasting about three months. These are a few examples of interventions trialed during the first cycle:

Teaching Strategies

- specific clarification of the aims of lessons for low attainers
- targeting the work of learning support assistants to support numeracy
- videos of lessons to analyse successful teaching and learning styles

Grouping Strategies

- experimental/variable seating plans
- gender based writing groups
- peer mentoring within a single ethnic group

Support Strategies

- mentoring by a learning coach
- peer mentoring by able students
- personalised learning programmes
- lunchtime enrichment projects
- use of an e-portal to upload homework details

At the **Second National Collaborative Development Day** in July 2004 there was a 'marketplace' at which all schools displayed the progress of their interventions. Schools' successes and challenges were discussed formally and informally: practitioners compared notes on what had or had not worked, systematically questioning what could be done to make their interventions more effective.

Assessing the impact on pupils: what the data shows

Caution should be exercised when attempting to draw overall conclusions from the results of diverse small scale interventions carried out over a short time period. Nevertheless there are some encouraging results to show for the first year's work of the National Collaborative.

Common sets of data were submitted by schools before, between and after the cycles completed in 2004. Besides data on attendance, homework, coursework and attitude, the attainment levels of around 300 pupils in English and 100 in each of Maths and Science were reported.

Even where interventions were not directly targeted at these core subjects it was hoped that some improvement would be apparent since positive attention and variation in teaching strategies in one subject can affect attainment in others. An analysis of the data supplied for all three core subjects shows that almost all pupils raised their attainment at a slightly faster termly rate than the national average, significantly so in Maths and Science.

Significant gains were also noted by many schools in areas such as attendance, homework completion, attitude and motivation, although the lack of standardisation in measuring and reporting such gains over this first year has so far made them hard to quantify overall.

The key conclusions and issues to have emerged from the collection and analysis of data over the first year are as follows:

- the attempt to measure the impact of an intervention in terms of pupil performance over a short period is impressive, novel and challenging
- there are positive indications about the quality and effectiveness of the interventions
- to add more value the collection of data needs to be more consistent and its recording and reporting more structured
- coherent and consistent ways of measuring attitude, motivation and engagement need to be agreed and developed.

The National Collaborative has now set up a working group to explore and develop an agreed strategy for measuring more reliably and rigorously the impact of interventions within and across schools. This group will draw on acknowledged experts in the field of measuring added value, e.g. the Fischer Family Trust.

Assessing the impact on pupils: three schools

In many cases it has been possible to make a meaningful assessment of the impact of particular interventions over just one or two rapid improvement cycles. Moreover almost all the trialled interventions have generated useful practitioner learning, even where there have been less apparent or immediate outcomes for pupils.

The **Thomas Hardye School** in Dorchester trialled several interventions over the course of the first cycle, of which three were undertaken by different Year 9 mixed ability tutor groups in the same five subjects: English, RE, History, Geography and Art.

Teachers assessed academic achievement and motivation every four weeks and all the data was collected electronically. Graphs were then produced to show the relative impact over time of each intervention on all the participants, on the 20% of lowest attainers and on those eligible for Free School Meals, in comparison with each other and with a control group.

One intervention was focussed on Assessment for Learning. Two groups of pupils discussed marking criteria with their teachers, and engaged in self and peer assessment leading to dialogue about grades. All students appeared to show gains in achievement as a result of this

intervention, especially FSM pupils and those in the lowest 20th percentile of ability. The students who seemed to be most highly motivated by AfL were those in the lowest 20th percentile.

Another intervention involved homework being set at the beginning of lessons for one teaching group. The participating pupils clearly achieved more than those in the control group. Notably teachers also identified an increase in motivation from students in the lowest 20th percentile. Undertaking this intervention and highlighting its potential as a learning tool has also encouraged useful debate between staff.

In another single teaching group fixed seating combinations incorporating mixed gender/ability were used for four weeks at a time and then changed. Achievement data appeared to show little beneficial effect from moving students within the class, but teachers reported improved concentration, motivation and attainment. Mixing gender also raised learning levels and mixing ability enabled peer support for the less able.

The beneficial effects of the last intervention were not fully sustained over the whole cycle, perhaps because teachers were likely to pick the most effective seating plan for their own particular

learning context for the first four week period. Nevertheless, teachers were made more aware of the danger of becoming complacent as to the detrimental effect some students can have on each other's learning, and of the importance of retaining control over classroom seating arrangements.

Kirk Hallam Community Technology College in Derbyshire have explored new ways of using subject specific Learning Support Assistants and Year 10 Peer Tutors to help pupils in Years 8 & 9 with numeracy and literacy. The intervention relies on the continuity of support provided by the same assistants for all the pupils' lessons, and on their involvement in the selection and creation of differentiated materials, including computer software, that will best reinforce key skills and concepts.

The most important successes have been

- the growth of pupils' confidence and their willingness to seek help
- their increased attendance at lunchtime homework clubs
- improved test results
- the doubling of numbers of Y10 volunteer peer tutors
- the increased confidence and subject knowledge of LSAs
- teachers' commitment to the groups and to running Numeracy and Literacy evenings for parents.

The biggest overall contributor to the success of these interventions has been the enthusiasm of all the participants, especially the pupils themselves in their eagerness to improve their skills.

Valentines High School in Redbridge have developed peer mentoring between Year 11 and Year 9 students of African and Caribbean origin with the initial help of a black training and consultancy company, but with the aim of building structures and systems that will enable the eventual continuation of the work without an external facilitator.

The focus of the programme has been on academic work, raising self esteem, promoting positive attitudes to learning, increasing aspirations, developing independent learning skills, increasing awareness of issues related to black underachievement, positive behaviour management, time management, organisational skills and encouraging the group to support each other in the process of setting and achieving targets.

Outcomes include

- reduced incidents of poor behaviour
- increased motivation
- improved levels and grades
- Y9 pupils valuing the positive role models in Y11 and amongst the external providers
- Y11 mentors' outstanding commitment along with increased communication, target setting and problem solving skills
- open and positive dialogue between black students and staff.

Overall the students have warmly welcomed the school's willingness openly to address this issue rather than shying away from it.

Emerging learning: a model for building collaborative practice

A number of common elements and themes have already begun to emerge. These have been drawn together into a model intended to provide a starting point for schools attempting to build innovative practice in collaboration with others and to apply the principles of rapid cycle improvement. Practitioner leaders can support the development of successful innovation and collaboration from the outset through a range of key management strategies, for example

- identifying areas for collaboration based on existing good practice
- identifying which pupils face the greatest learning challenges
- establishing baselines and setting targets
- sharing pupil data within and between schools
- modelling collaborative behaviours and values

- assessing likely barriers and how to overcome them
- allocating sufficient resources (especially time) to support the work

As the work progresses, they can build on early success, help to maintain the momentum of rapid cycle improvement and ensure ongoing knowledge development by

- reviewing and clarifying the focus of the improvement work
- tracking the ongoing impact of classroom interventions
- involving pupils in an understanding of their learning
- creating opportunities for professional exchanges between staff
- evaluating processes and outcomes with pupils and practitioners
- systematising the learning principles to ensure sustainability.

